

When I was a little puppy, I entertained you with my antics and often made you laugh. You called me "Your Child" and despite the number of stolen shoes and some throw pillows that I "murdered", I became your best friend. Whenever I was "naughty," you showed me the point of your finger and said, "How could you?" - But then you had to relent and rolled me on my side to scratch my belly. My stay in the apartment during your studies was getting longer, but I pulled myself together. I remember those nights when I thought of you in bed, I snuggled close and I listened, how you talked in your sleep and I thought that life could not be more perfect. We went to the park for a long walk or romp, we went for rides in the car, we bought ice cream (I only got the rest of the wafer with a little ice cream, because "too much ice cream is not healthy for dogs" you said). When home, I napped in the sunbeam that shone through the balcony door into the living room, waiting until you came home from work.

Gradually, you spent more time at work building on your "career" than at home with me. You also now spent a lot of time trying to find a "human body." I always waited patiently for you, comforted you in your disappointments and heartbreaks and was looking forward to your success with a woman. She is now your wife, and is not a "dog lover," but still I welcomed her into our home, respected her and showed her that I liked her. I was happy because you were happy!

Then came the time when babies were born. I shared the excitement with you, fascinated with the smooth skin and the pleasant smell of the babies; I too wanted to mother them. But you and your wife only thought that I might harm the children. So I was banished and spent most of my time in another room. Oh, how I wanted to love them, but the opportunity was not given to me, because I was a "prisoner of love." As they began to grow, I became their friend. They pulled on my fur, attacked me on their wobbly legs, pushed their fingers into my eyes, explored in my ears and gave me kisses on my nose.

I loved everything about them, especially their touch, because yours had been so rare. I was so much in love that I would defend the children, if needed, with my life. I was ready to sneak into their beds, to listen to their worries and secret dreams. Together I waited with them, anticipating the engine noise of your car when you drove into the driveway.

A long time ago when someone asked you if you had a pet, you pulled a photo of me out of your wallet and with full pride told them about me. The last few years, you answered only "yes" and changed the subject. I used to be "Your Dog" and am now "just a dog".

Then you had a new career opportunity in another city. You and your family moved into an apartment, where pets were not allowed. You had to make the right decision for you and your family, even though there was once a time when "I" was your family. Man oh man; the car ride was fun until I realized where we were going. It smelled of dogs and cats, of fear, of hopelessness. You filled out the papers and said that you knew that they would find a good home for me. The two ladies behind the counter shrugged their shoulders and showed you a pained look. They understood the reality; a middle-aged dog, even with "papers" was doomed. You had to loosen your son's fingers from my collar as he screamed in tears, "No Daddy, please let me take my dog!" I wondered at this moment just how you would

give him lessons about friendship and loyalty, to teach about love and have responsibility. For your farewell you gave me a pat on the head, avoided looking me in the eyes and politely refused to take my collar and my leash. You had a deadline to meet, and now I have one too! Shortly after you were gone, the two nice ladies said that you probably knew months in advance of the move and thus decided this was a "good place" to find a new home for me. They shook their heads and wondered....." How could you? "

The two nice ladies devoted their full attention to me whenever their time permitted. They fed me daily but I had lost my appetite days ago.

At first, whenever anyone rushed by my cage, I ran to the front, hoping that you would be there, and that you had changed your mind, and that was all a bad dream, or I hoped it would at least be someone who liked me, and would save me.

But the truth was that I could not compare with the lovable, small, and oh-so clumsy puppies. Oblivious to my fate I retreated into a soft corner and waited.

One afternoon, I heard footsteps. They picked me up and took me through a long corridor to a room at the end. It was a blissful, quiet room. The woman placed me on a table, rubbed my ears and told me that I would not have to worry. My heart was fully expecting what was to come.

I also had a sense of relief. Me, the "prisoner of love" had run out of days. According to my nature I was more concerned about the kind woman than for myself. I realized that she had a burden to bear that had to weigh a ton. They placed a light IV in my foreleg as a tear rolled down her cheek. I licked her hand in the same way as I had done to you years before to comfort her. She slid the hypodermic needle expertly into my vein. After I felt the sting and the onset of cool fluid in my body, I leaned back tired, looked into her friendly eyes and murmured "How could you?" Perhaps she understood my dogs speak, for she said: "I'm sorry" She hugged me and hurriedly explained that it was her job to help me get to a better place where I would not be ignored, abused or abandoned, a place where I would not have to hide, a place of love and light that is so different than on Earth.

With my last bit of energy I wagged my tail and tried to tell her that my "How could you?" was not directed against her. I thought of you, my beloved master. I will always think of you and will wait for you. May everyone in your life always show such loyalty.

A few words of the author:

When "How could you?" drives tears into your eyes then you felt just like me when I wrote this. Anyone may pass on this story as long as it is for non-commercial purposes. Explain to the public that the decision to accept a pet into a family is an important one for life because animals deserve our love and respect.

Signed, Jim Willis